

STATUS OF ZIPLINE PROPOSAL AT JACKS PEAK COUNTY PARK

Thank you for your interest in the Ziptrek Ecotours ("Ziptrek") project proposed for Jacks Peak County Park. While we are still at the proposal/negotiations stage, the following information can be released at this time:

On December 1, 2009, in open session, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors authorized County staff to enter into contract negotiations with Ziptrek for the operation of a potential zipline concession at Jacks Peak.

Since we are currently engaged in those negotiations, we are not at liberty to discuss the specific details of the proposed concession agreement with Ziptrek until the negotiations are completed and the proposed agreement is ready to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors for their review and approval. Separately, the environmental review will be the subject of its own analysis and public review to the extent required by law.

Preliminary Project Description

Ziptrek started the first zipline tour in North America almost a decade ago, and as a result, has a positive international reputation regarding zipline experiences, infrastructure designs and patents, and maintains a respected reputation in the industry they helped pioneer. Ziptrek's purpose is to engage the public in sustainability education by immersing people in spectacular natural environments in the lowest impact way possible – hence the ziplines. Forest researchers use similar systems around the world in order to access forest canopies in delicate ecosystems.

Education is an important aspect of the Ziptrek experience; the program and infrastructure provides and promotes this opportunity. Through the unique vantage point overlooking the tree canopy, the Jacks Peak Ecotour shall address our local efforts to sustain the endemic stand of the Monterey Pine Forest.

The proposed project consists of a short series of ziplines which move quickly into areas of the Park that are currently impossible to reach by most visitors. Other than the zipline cables, which are under an inch thick, the current design incorporates un-intrusive wooden platforms for participants to stand on between traveling on the zipline in order to avoid soil compaction and erosion. The ziplines are gravity based and will not require an external power source.

Tours of up to 10 people will start and end in Monterey – not in the Park. Ziptrek participants will be shuttled to and from the Park in a small shuttle vehicle, and there will not be more than 3 tours per hour. The shuttle vehicle will only occupy a parking space momentarily as the passengers disembark and are picked up, however the parking lots of the Park are currently underutilized to the point of often being empty. Despite the abundance of parking, tour participants will not be allowed to take their own vehicles to or from the Park for the zipline tour.

Visibility

The closest residents to the site live at the Pacific Meadows residential community which is an average of approximately 2000 feet away from the residences and is on the other side of a high, forested ridge. A computer analysis of sightlines indicates that Ziptrek will not be visible from Pacific Meadows.

Noise

In sound tests performed from 3 different locations 2000 feet away from a currently existing and operating Ziptrek facility (including places without a high forested ridge to block sound) no operationally related noise was detectable.

Traffic

Preliminary traffic studies performed to date suggest that 3 tours per hour is acceptable and has no perceivable impact on the normal amount of traffic.

Wildlife

Ziptrek currently operates daily in an ancient rainforest that has never been impacted by human activity. The site is teeming with wildlife, including bears, mountain lions and rare birds. After ten years at that site, there is no indication of dispersal or disruption of wildlife. In fact a rare pygmy owl recently moved in to the area. Notwithstanding this experience, the environmental review of the Jacks Peak Park site shall include assessment of any potential impact on local flora and fauna.

General Environmental Stewardship

Ziptrek has a long history as a model of environmental responsibility and has received numerous awards in recognition of its environmental leadership from the communities in which it operates.

Tree Impact

Ziptrek's chief structural engineer has worked with Dr. Reese Halter (a well known forest biologist with a specialty in tree physiology based in California) so that if a living tree is used as part of the zipline infrastructure, it is not harmed by its use. Ziptrek does not clear a swath of forest between the two ends of the cable as some companies do, but rather works within and above the forest canopy to avoid having to remove anything more than a few trees per line which are then offset with a multitude of new plantings.

Tourism Enhancement

Monterey would benefit from a new, world-class, nature-based attraction that family members of all ages and abilities can enjoy together. Ziptrek is likely to appeal to the same people who visit the Monterey Bay Aquarium and will likely enhance tourism by increasing the amount of time and money people spend in the community.

Furthermore, Jacks Peak Park is a grossly underutilized park. The proposed Ziptrek better opens the full extent of the park to a semi-wilderness experience for visitors, with the added benefit of keeping feet from trampling the ground in many places, and promoting awareness of sustainability issues that impact both the Park and society at large. In fact, it is anticipated that Ziptrek will have a far smaller impact on the Park ecology than current uses by equestrians and patrons who hike and travel within the Park with pets or bicycles.

Pending environmental assessments will provide additional information and opportunity for evaluation.

Sustainable New Jobs

Finally, Ziptrek currently employs hundreds of people in great, natural resource-based jobs that are truly sustainable because they do not consume the natural resource upon which they are based.